

Gartner®

2025 Digital IQ Strategy Guide for CMOs

Make the right digital marketing decisions
with proven tactics from industry leaders.

An abstract graphic in the bottom right corner featuring several overlapping lines and shapes in shades of blue. There are solid blue lines, dashed blue lines, and light blue shaded areas, creating a sense of movement and data visualization.

Top CMOs make the right investments

Chief marketing officers (CMOs) navigating the complexities of today's unpredictable environment face the precarious challenge of meeting ambitious targets around growth with increasingly limited resources. Success hinges on making the right digital marketing investments.

Many CMOs rely on tactical guidance and analytics without a true understanding of what industry leaders are doing and why. The best CMOs seek to prioritize the unbiased evaluation of their marketing efforts, measure their performance against industry leaders and integrate proven approaches into their own organizations.

Gartner's Digital IQ analysis of 1,243 brands across 12 industries revealed the top 3% of digital marketing brands — the Genius Brands — apply three key tactics to exceed their growth objectives:

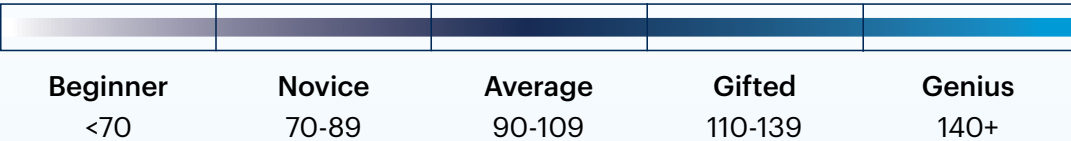
- 1. Invest in strategic planning capabilities**
- 2. Enhance customer understanding**
- 3. Create perspective-changing experiences**

The following benchmarks and recommended actions can help CMOs develop best-in-class strategies, generate executive buy-in and execute with precision.

Ranking brands by digital marketing performance

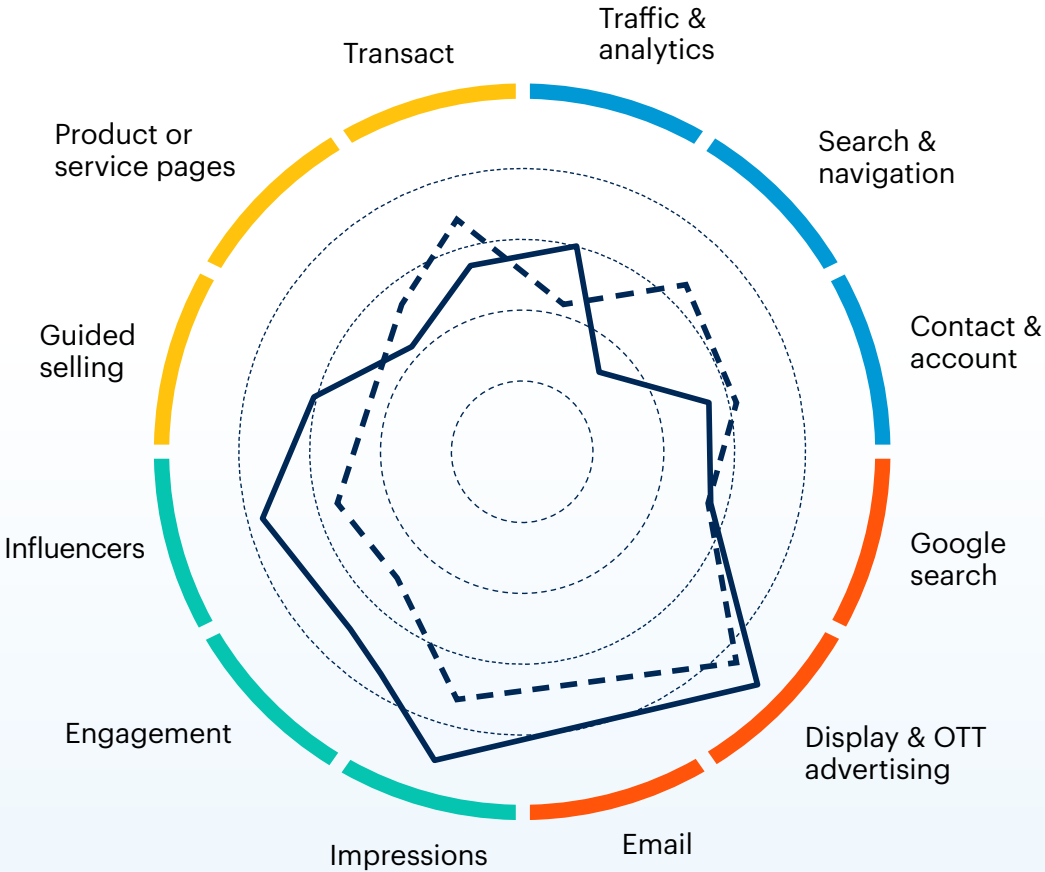
Gartner Digital IQ measures a brand’s digital performance across four key dimensions: website, digital marketing channels, social media and path to purchase. The Gartner Digital IQ Index scores this performance and assigns one of five profiles: beginner, novice, average, gifted or genius. This proprietary tool helps CMOs compare their brand’s performance to industry competitors, prioritize investments and maintain relevance across channels.

Digital IQ Score Index



Of the 1,243 brands Gartner Digital IQ analyzes each year, only 36 brands achieved Genius status. These brands are thriving amid the chaotic volatility of digital platforms.

By analyzing job postings, tech use, public mentions, digital KPIs, press mentions, earnings calls and interviews, Gartner has identified three key priorities to help CMOs make the right digital marketing investments.



Source: Gartner
The Digital IQ Index chart highlights the relative performance of a given brand versus the index average parsed across 12 critical components of digital marketing within the four primary dimensions of analysis.

The 2025 Genius Brands by Industry



Food & Beverages

The Coca-Cola Company
Gatorade
Red Bull



Luxury Retail

Ralph Lauren
Coach
Dior



Personal Care

Maybelline
e.l.f. Cosmetics
Pampers



Healthcare Delivery

AdventHealth
Sutter Health
Baylor Scott & White



Manufacturing & Chemicals

John Deere
Sherwin-Williams
CAT



Pharma Rx

Dupixent
Nurtec ODT
Skyrizi



Homecare & OTC

Tide
Downy
Arm & Hammer Home Care



Monobrand Retail

Samsung
Nike
Apple



Retail Banking

Capital One
Chase
Wells Fargo



Insurance

Progressive Insurance
State Farm
Allstate



Multibrand Retail

Amazon
Sephora
The Home Depot



Wealth & Asset Management

Fidelity Investments
Charles Schwab
E*TRADE

CMO Priority 1

Boost strategic planning capabilities

What most companies do

The majority of CMOs struggle to balance long-term planning with short-term goals. According to the Gartner 2025 CMO Strategy Survey, **only 15% of CMOs** develop long-range strategic plans spanning three or more years.

What Genius Brands do

Genius Brands hire specifically to support long-term strategy and foster innovation. Genius Brands are **2x as likely** to hire marketing strategy roles compared to non-Genius Brands.

Why it matters

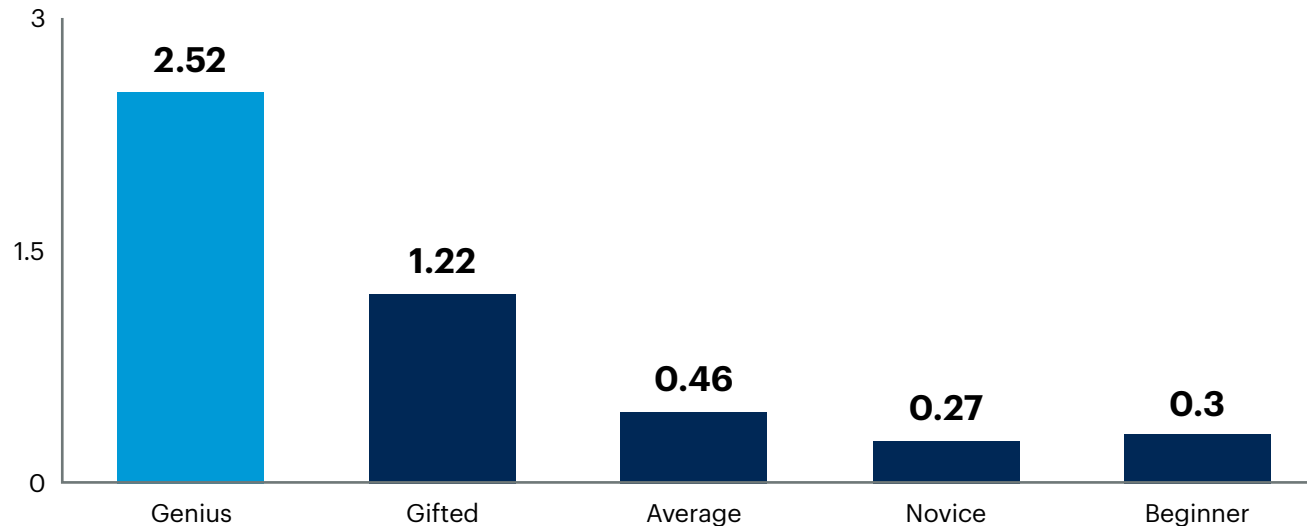
CMOs that develop long-range strategic plans (three-plus years) are **1.5x more likely** to report high performance in their marketing efforts. Aside from the internal benefits, these Genius Brands are **more than 3x as likely** to see their innovations generate press mentions.

TAKE ACTION

Invest in marketing strategists

Genius Brands invest in marketing strategists

Average brand hires for marketing strategy and marketing strategists by DIQ class (January 2023 – June 2024)



n = 29,720 LinkedIn Job Postings (559 Gartner Digital IQ Brands)
Source: Gartner analysis of Coresignal data

Get started

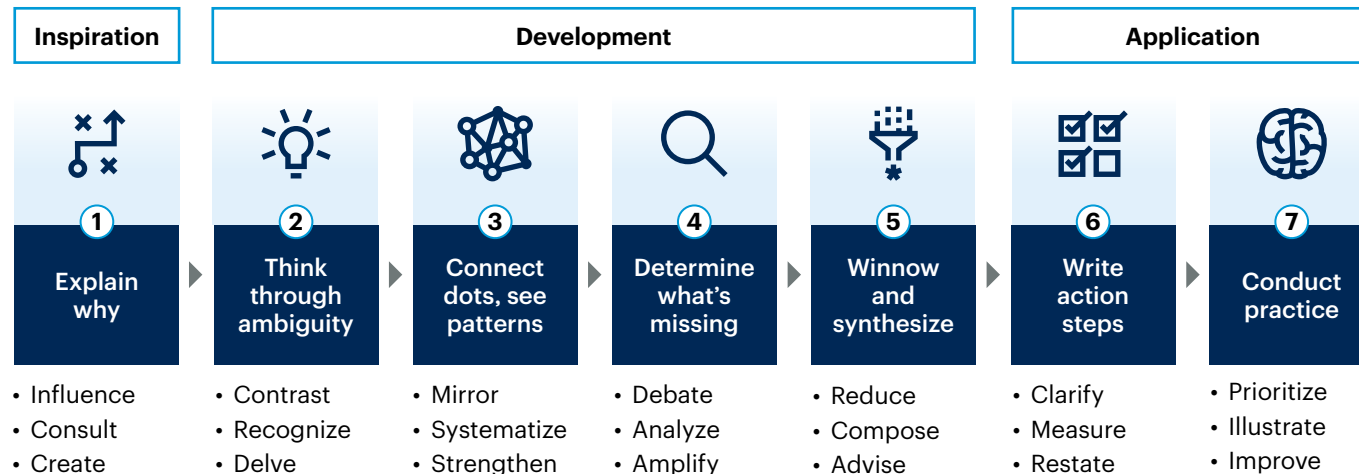
- ☐ **Establish a talent strategy** that prioritizes hiring and embeds long-term strategic planning across multiple levels of the marketing function.
- ☐ **Define what candidates must demonstrate** to succeed in a role by clearly identifying mandatory, non-negotiable behavioral competencies, along with key hard skills.
- ☐ **Evaluate a candidate's proficiency** with each competency by creating questions and assessments. Identify ways to probe further during interviews.
- ☐ **Standardize candidate evaluation** by creating an interview template with established criteria and consistent input from interviewers.

TAKE ACTION

Develop strategic thinking at the team level

7 steps to uplevel strategic thinking skills

Improve marketing teams' skills to increase business impact by creating value



Source: Gartner

Get started

- ☐ **Tie in the business implications of strategic thinking** skills to the personal growth of your marketing team.
- ☐ **Coach your marketing team** to think through ambiguity, connect the dots, see patterns, determine what's missing and synthesize insights into recommendations.
- ☐ **Ensure marketing team members create action steps** and follow up with key stakeholders to ensure progress against key goals on strategic initiatives.
- ☐ **Reserve and prioritize strategic thinking practice time** and conduct exercises with your team to hone their skills. Encourage the team to apply these skills to strategic initiatives and when consulting with business stakeholders.

CMO Priority 2

Enhance customer understanding

What most companies do

Despite their best efforts, most marketing leaders report their campaigns frequently miss targets.

This is typically caused by a lack of relevancy or resonance with the target audience. In fact, across the U.K., U.S. and Canada, **58% of consumers** feel most companies don't understand their preferences and needs.

What Genius Brands do

Genius Brands excel by prioritizing customer insights to differentiate value across channels. They adopt a long-term strategy for key technologies, recruit talent to enhance tech utilization, and refine processes to maximize data value.

Genius Brands' turnover rate of customer experience (CX) technologies is **18% lower** versus non-Genius Brands.

Why it matters

Improving customer understanding can improve touchpoint relevance and increase ROI on content and media.

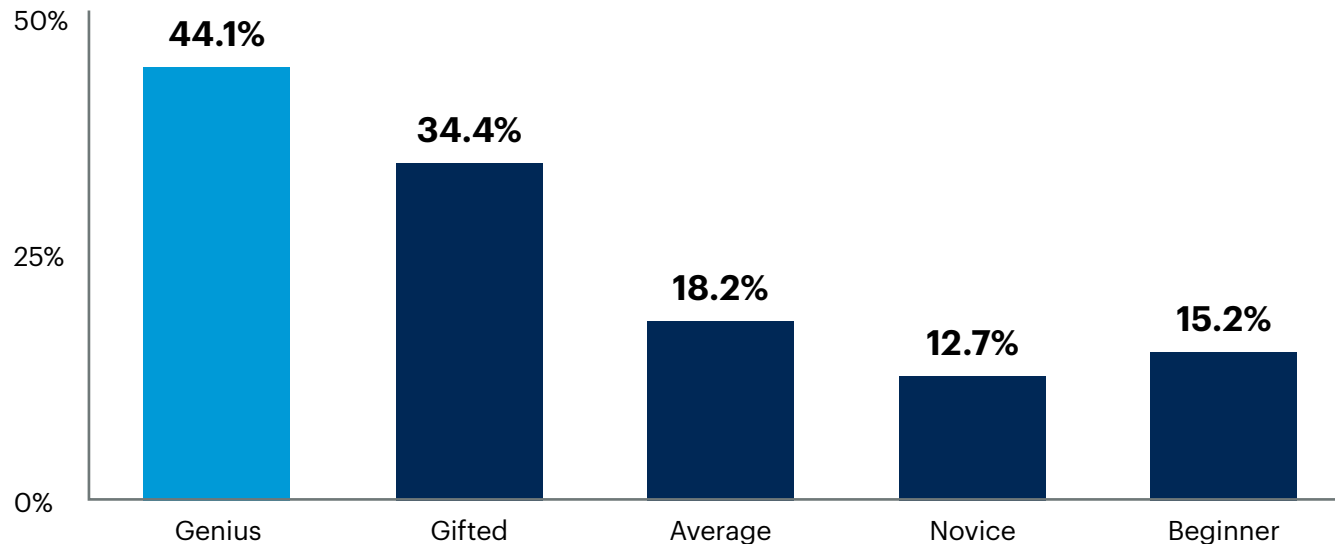
On earnings calls, Genius Brands frequently emphasize terms such as long-term marketing strategy, brand consistency and customer understanding, averaging **55 mentions** per call and **22 per speaker**. This focus highlights the crucial role of customer insights in driving company growth.

TAKE ACTION

Zero-in on customer-focused tech

Share of brands deploying at least one VoC platform

By Digital IQ Class



n = 924 brands
Source: Gartner analysis of BuiltWith data

Get started

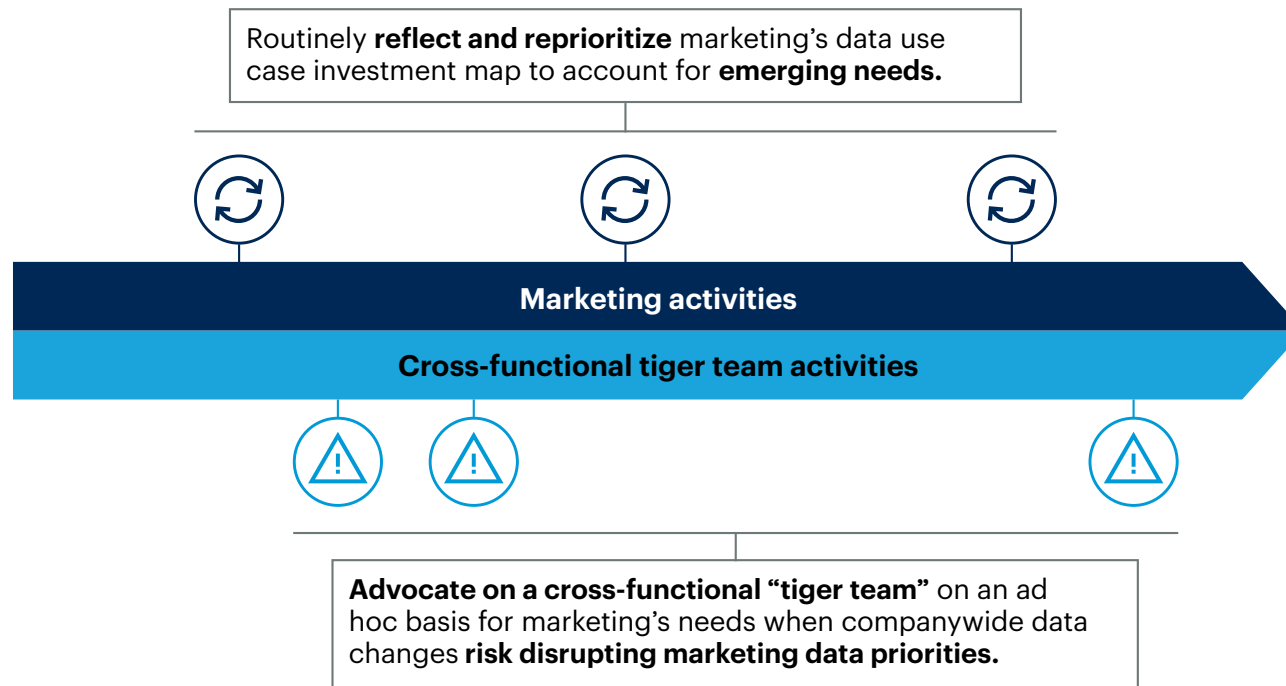
- ☐ **Invest in CX technologies.** Prioritize the adoption of technologies that enhance customer understanding and support CX, such as voice-of-the-customer (VoC) platforms.
- ☐ **Stabilize martech platforms** to reduce platform turnover. Focus on maintaining a stable martech stack to allow for long-term strategy development and full leverage of advanced features.
- ☐ **Align talent and technology strategy.** Hire professionals skilled in specific martech tools to ensure the team can effectively use technology and maximize benefits.
- ☐ **Evaluate martech partners.** Regularly assess current and potential partners for features and innovations that align with long-term business goals to ensure they support future growth and adaptability.
- ☐ **Measure ROI.** Calculate the business benefits of increased technology utilization and ensure the organization has the necessary skills and capacity to capitalize on these opportunities.

TAKE ACTION

Develop data-efficiency processes

Strategy for agile marketing data investments

Illustrative



Source: Adapted from Sephora

Get started

- ☐ **Interview cross-organizational data stakeholders.** Identify common and underserved use cases by engaging with data stakeholders across departments.
- ☐ **Define martech and data use cases by business outcomes.** Start with business outcomes to clarify use cases and reduce risks around tool incompatibilities or poor measurement.
- ☐ **Prioritize resources based on feasibility.** Assess data accessibility, ownership and resource needs to prioritize requests effectively.
- ☐ **Build a cross-functional team.** Hire or upskill internally to form a team focused on both martech and data management responsibilities.
- ☐ **Create a unified data source.** Ensure the team has a single source of truth for data priorities and align martech strategy with cross-functional support.

CMO Priority 3

Create perspective-changing experiences

What most companies do

Only 28% of U.S. consumers report ever having had a perspective-changing experience with a brand. This indicates most brands are missing the mark on delivering meaningful experiences and activating their full commercial potential.

What Genius Brands do

Genius Brands pay close attention to the full customer journey, identifying the most-valuable touchpoints and segments to act on. Some Genius Brands align their organizational structures to specific stages of the customer funnel to enhance accountability for influencing customer journeys, while others rely more on internal processes that make sense in their business context.

Why it matters

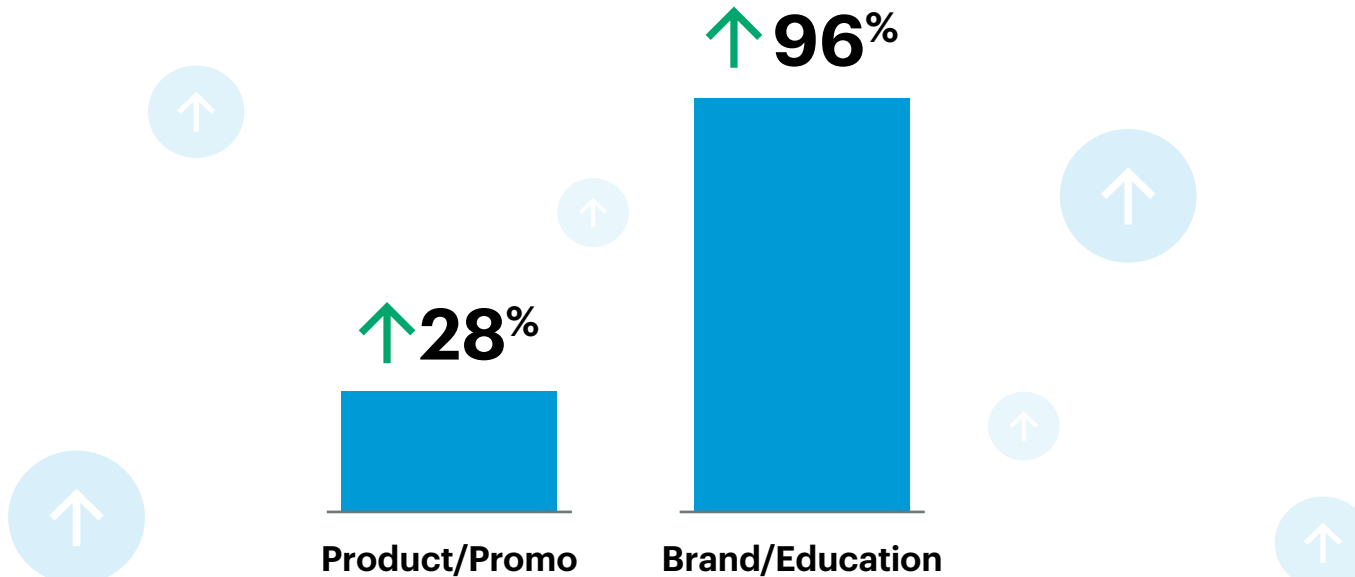
Investing in perspective-changing experiences helps marketing leaders do less to get more.

Gartner research shows that just one perspective-changing experience is **2x as likely** to result in commercially productive behaviors, such as paying a premium or referring other customers to the brand.

TAKE ACTION

Balance product promotions with educational content

YoY growth in Instagram ad impressions by Genius Brands, by ad type
2024 vs. 2023



n = 233, 153 Instagram Ads
Source: Gartner analysis of Pathmatics Data

Get started

- ☐ **Align organizational structures to customer funnel stages** to enhance accountability, pinpoint unmet customer needs and improve customer understanding.
- ☐ **Prioritize education-oriented ads** rather than conversion-oriented ads on social channels.
- ☐ **Use interactive formats** to deliver educational content that encourages customer dialogue and participation.
- ☐ **Invest in branded search text ads** that drive to product pages to create a strategic balance.
- ☐ **Drive more traffic to specific product or informational pages.** Genius Brands put less of a premium on traffic from branded search text ads to the homepage.



23% of Genius Brands invest in branded search ads, compared to other brands at **just 13%.**

TAKE ACTION

Focus touchpoints with personalization

Formulating personalization tactics: Illustrative B2B Example

Primary business objective	Increase client retention and expand market presence.
Customer needs:	Find reliable and scalable manufacturing solutions that improve operational efficiency, reduce production costs and ensure timely delivery of products.
Personalization goal	Build long-term relationships that offer tailored manufacturing solutions that address each client's unique industry requirements.
Prioritized pivotal moment	Exploration
Supportive action required by the customer	To develop prospect confidence that they are choosing the best service solution.
Personalization tactics	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Deliver purposeful value exchange through minimal customer data input to contextualize the exploration experience.2. Utilize the third-party data on the customer's preferences to provide contextualized content and information on the service solutions provided by the brand

Source: Gartner

Get started

- ☐ **Use personalization engines** to tailor site touchpoints based on prior customer engagement and enhance engagement within the user experience.
- ☐ **Integrate technologies with generative AI capabilities** to create intricate, personalized customer journeys at scale.
- ☐ **Regularly measure the effectiveness of AI-driven personalization** on customer engagement and site journey depth to inform strategy adjustments.
- ☐ **Keep up with the latest personalization developments** using Gartner Magic Quadrant™ for Personalization Engines.



Genius Brands average
40% more pages per visit on desktop
and **9% more** on mobile devices.

Accelerate your path to Genius: How Gartner can help

1

Boost long-term strategic planning capabilities.

Gartner for Marketing Score helps CMOs measure, prioritize and improve their marketing function's capabilities, with key insights and resources for:

- Strategic planning
- Functional transformation
- Resource allocation
- Consensus building

2

Enhance customer understanding with tech and talent.

Use **Gartner BuySmart™** to:

- Discover a wide range of possible martech vendor solutions
- Evaluate vendors using requirements, questionnaires, scorecards and more
- Select martech vendors with unbiased, aggregated team scores
- Optimize spend and reduce risk with a Gartner expert proposal review

3

Create perspective-changing experiences.

Use the **Gartner Magic Quadrant for Personalization Engines** to:

- Understand how personalization enables transformative consumer experiences
- Identify core personalization capabilities for your organization
- Select, tailor and deliver personalized experiences based on key use cases

Case Studies

Genius Brands in action



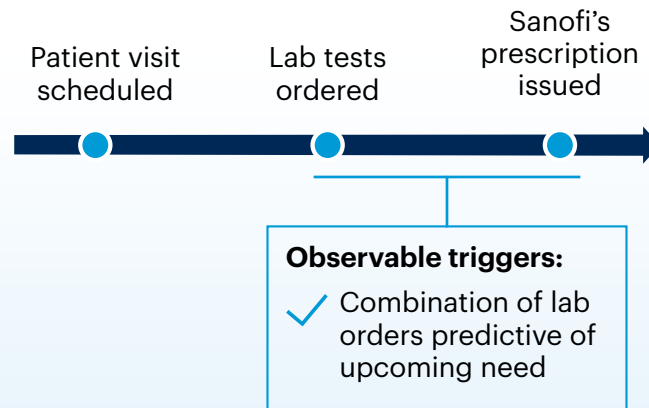
How Sanofi used AI-based recommendations to alert sellers to timely opportunities



Illustrative

Sanofi used AI to identify buying signals and enhance seller engagement with prospects. Accounts using predictive recommendations saw a 9.6% increase in sales from digital content and a 37% rise in sales volume. This approach not only improved the efficiency of face-to-face sales activities, but also extended the value of omnichannel marketing through coordinated interactions across marketing and sales channels.

Typical early-stage customer journey



AI-recommended trigger-based alert sample

John Doe, Field Representative
2007722184

Plan a visit with this provider as soon as possible!

- **Upcoming need:** Anonymized lab records indicate some patients of this provider may be good candidates for this medicine.

Posted today [Dismiss](#) | [Mark as done](#)

Source: Adapted from Sanofi

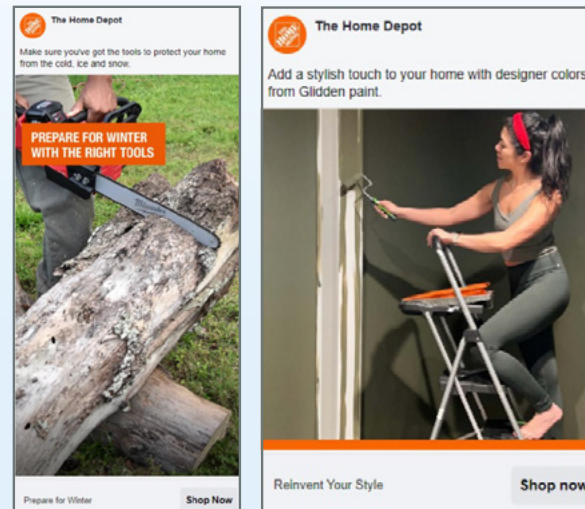
How The Home Depot went from selling products to selling productivity



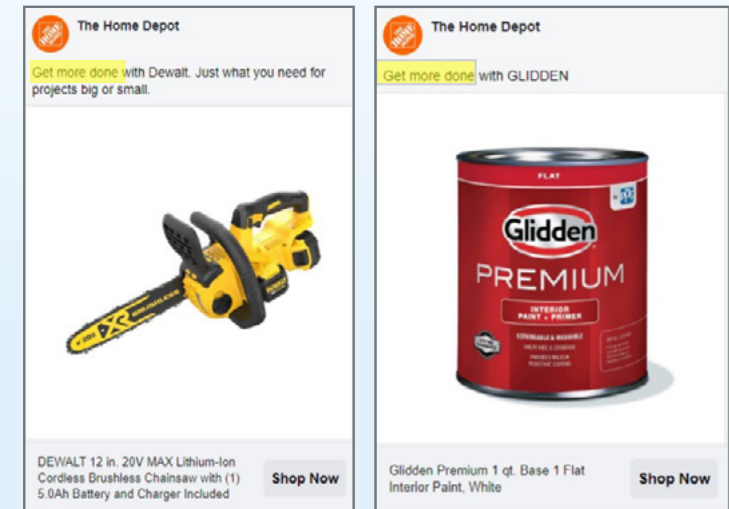
Nov. 2022 – Nov. 2023 vs. Nov. 2023 – Nov. 2024

The Home Depot shifted its focus from selling products to promoting productivity. Its educational “Get more done” campaign saw a 6.6x increase in Instagram impressions. By tapping into customer aspirations around personal productivity, The Home Depot expanded engagement and strengthened customer connections with a more meaningful experience.

1.8x
more impressions on branding/educational Instagram ads (YoY)



6.6x
more impressions on branding/educational Instagram ads containing “get more done” slogan (YoY)



n = 44,432 Instagram Ads on 1 Genius Brand
Source: Gartner analysis of Pathmatics Data

How Sephora prioritized work to reduce data inefficiencies

SEPHORA

As part of its annual planning process, Sephora audits its marketing data investments to prioritize use cases based on feasibility and impact. This approach enhances flexibility and efficiency by standardizing data collection and storage. Sephora recently established a martech and data management director to oversee these efforts. This annual planning and review approach fosters innovation to deliver more long-term value.

Data use case investment prioritization mapping process

Illustrative

■ High ■ Medium ■ Low + Benefits teams beyond marketing

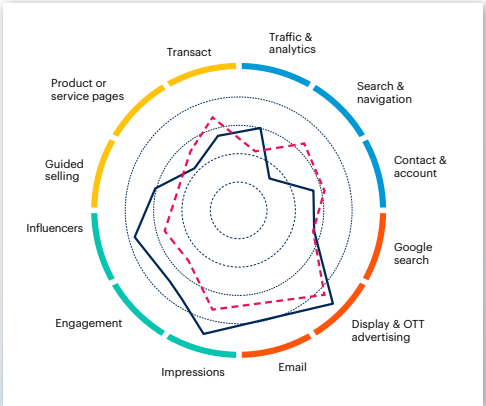
Categorize use cases by goal	Assess business impacts and feasibility					Prioritize
	Teams benefited	Operational impact	Customer impact	Sales lift	Feasibility	
Personalization					Medium	1
					Medium	2
					Low	3
Operational efficiency	+				High	1
	+				High	2
					Low	3
New/better insights	+				High	1
					Medium	2
					Medium	3

Source: Adapted from Sephora

How Gartner clients get even more value from Digital IQ

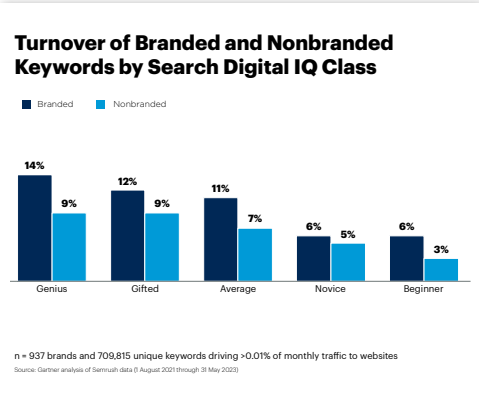
Visualize and Compare Performance

Benchmark your digital performance with a Gartner expert to see how you compare against industry leaders and competitors.



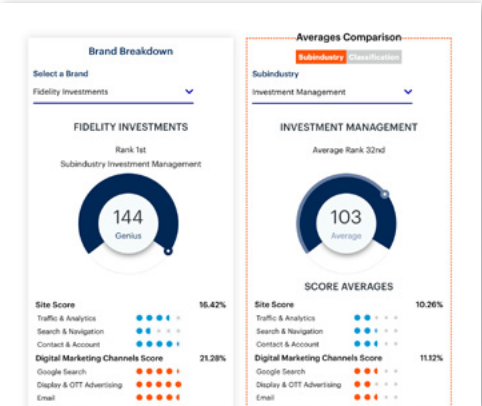
Digital Channel Benchmarks and Best Practices

Deep dive into digital channel performance against industry standards to identify optimization opportunities and set performance goals.



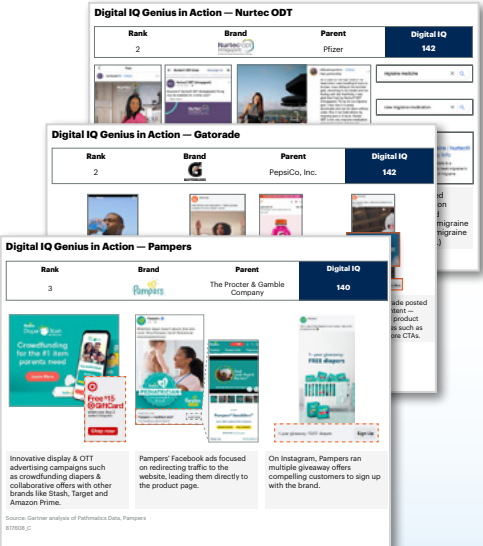
Industry Benchmarks and Best Practices

Navigate critical trends affecting your industry, including evolving customer behaviors, shifts in competitors' strategies and new digital best practices.

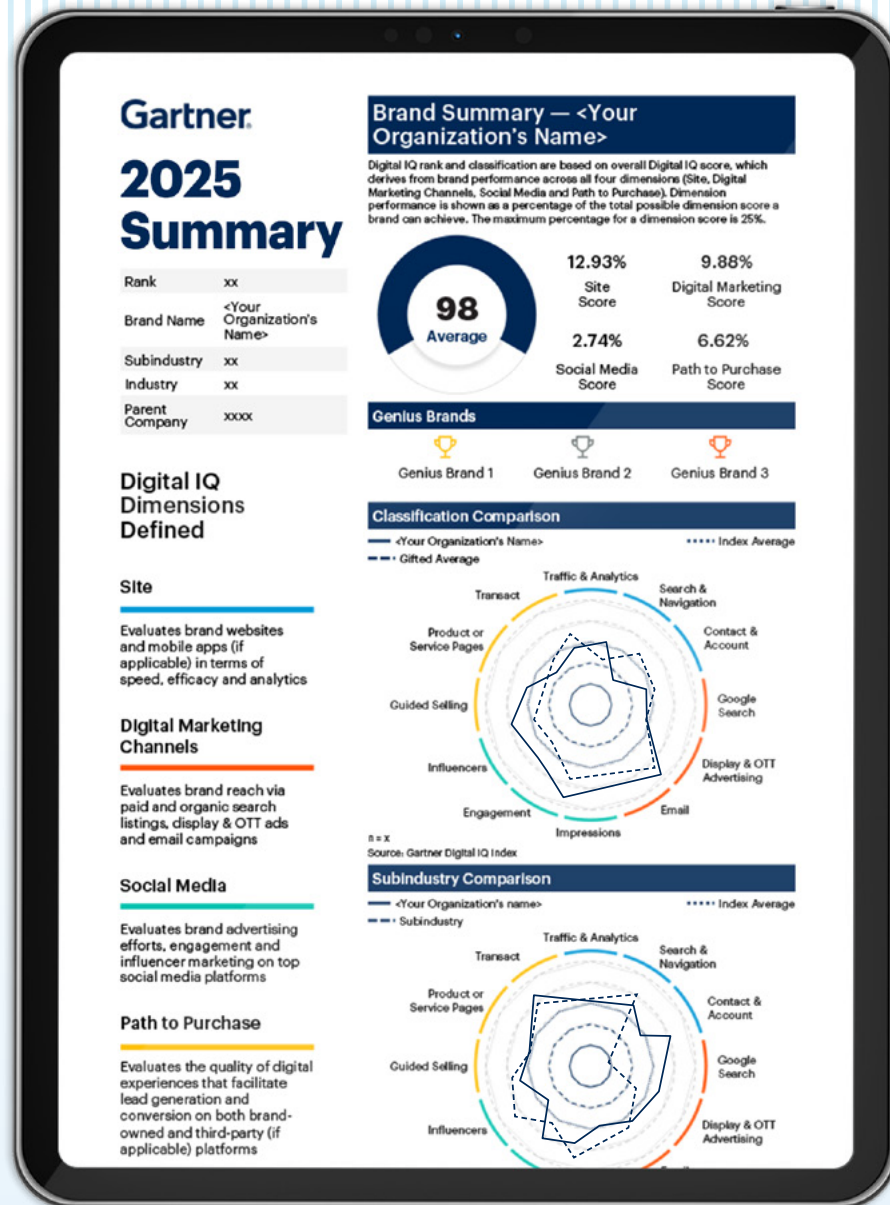


Case Studies

Explore the specific strategies that industry leaders are leveraging to fuel success.



Source: Gartner



Get started with a complimentary Digital IQ Summary

Get a customized overview of how your brand compares to industry leaders that includes Digital IQ dimensions and CMO spend benchmarks against peers.

➔ Request Your Digital IQ Summary

Please note: If you are not one of the 1,200+ brands we have evaluated, you will be provided an industry overview summary.

Actionable, objective insight

Explore these additional complimentary resources and tools for marketing leaders:

Webinar

Become a “Genius” Digital Marketing Brand

Deep-dive into the winning Genius Brands’ strategies and get actionable insights for CMOs.

[Watch Now](#)

Research

Catalytic Marketing for Marketing Leaders

Maximize your marketing impact with the best marketing strategy to boost profitable growth with minimal effort.

[Download Now](#)

Research

Marketing Talent Trends for CMOs

Hire and upskill your teams amid data disruptions and emergence of GenAI.

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Research

4 Actions to Improve Martech ROI

Learn how to drive value from martech and deliver efficient growth.

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